

**Monthly Updates, August 2015
BIGD, BRAC University**

**IGC-BIGD Round Table on
Urbanisation Challenges: Formulating a Research Agenda for Policy Action**



Participants at the Roundtable sharing their opines

BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University and London based International Growth Centre (IGC) co-organised a Roundtable on Urbanisation Challenges: Formulating a Research Agenda for Policy Action on August 22nd, 2015 at the Daily Star Centre, Dhaka. The discussion focused on current urbanisation challenges affecting Dhaka with the aim to define a research agenda that can be helpful in providing policy solutions to the downsides of urban density.

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Executive Director, BIGD and Country Director, IGC gave an introductory speech on the urban challenges that Dhaka is been facing for now more than two decades: congestion, environment and economic disparities. These challenges have been undermining the quality of life in Dhaka as regularly reported by the urban livability indexes. Mr. Fahad Khalil, IGC Lead Academic and Castor Professor of Economics and Chair of the Department of Economics, University of Washington, chaired the event.

Architect Iqbal Habib and Architect Tanwir Nawaz contributed to the first session on the congestion issues in Dhaka discussing the necessity of better transport policies for Dhaka city, clear pathways for pedestrians and efforts in educating Dhaka city-dwellers with road traffic rules. The use of private transportation in Dhaka streets was also raised as one of the main challenges. Today 80 percent of Dhaka roads are occupied by private transports while public transportation needs to be improved to provide a better and cheaper alternative to Dhaka commuters.



Participants at the Roundtable sharing their opines

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Chairperson, Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) introduced the second session focusing on urban health and environment. Dr. Hossain Zillur expressed the need of a continuous dialogue between academia and public sector, and how the former can contribute to provide solutions to the policy makers in health and environmental issues. Dr. Taibur Rahman, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Planning, and Dr. Khairul Islam, Country Representative, Water Aid Bangladesh, evidenced the need of more government attention to the urban issues. Dr. Taibur Rahman discussed the government activity in drafting the Delta Plan, the upcoming government environmental plan and its priorities. Dr. Khairul Islam highlighted how water borne diseases caused by poor water sanitation infrastructures are putting at stake urban health.

Mr. Rashadul Hasan, Project Coordinator, Value for Waste, Swisscontact, discussed the challenges and the economic potential of waste recycling. He also presented Swisscontact's experience in introducing household recycling practices in Dhaka northern area.

Finally, Mr. Ashekur Rahman of UNDP, introduced the third session on housing and urban disparities presenting the UNDP Urban Housing project and how new forms of collective financing can be implemented to provide land tenure and housing to the urban poor. Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman also added how urban poverty is a major area about which the decision makers lack research knowledge.

In the concluding remarks, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman and Prof. Khalil discussed the importance of having the public sector, civil societies and private sector discussing with the research institutions in order to find sustainable and long term solutions to the social and environmental challenges faced by Bangladesh.

BIGD Organised Seminar on Performance Management System of Public Service Commission and Information Commission of Bangladesh



(From left to right) Mr. Martuza Ahmed, Dr. Sadaat Hussein, Dr Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu MP, Mr. Muhammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Mr. Ekram Ahmed and Prof. Dr. Khurshida Begum Sayeed seen at the seminar

A Seminar on Performance Management of the Public Service Commission and Information Commission of Bangladesh was organised by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University, in partnership with the Cabinet Division of the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank on 30th August, 2015 at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka.

Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu MP, Honorable Minister, Ministry of Information attended the event as the Chief Guest. He urged the government officials to act within the law and come out of corrupt practices like lobbying and political influence. He emphasised on the need for Government of Bangladesh to adjust certain practices, to be able to stand alongside other countries of the region and the globe, as a well performing democracy. He highlighted the issues that can help the public servants to improve their efficiency level and said they must be 'innovative' and earn 'entrepreneurial' quality to bypass the influence. He also stressed on building a skill-based administration by practicing meritocracy. He added, the Government Performance Management System (GPMS) can help public officials focus and align their expertise with the right institutions.

Dr. Sadaat Hussein, former Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC) Chairman and Cabinet Secretary, in the keynote speech made some crucial points. He argued that control of corruption practice at the top four levels of government institutions and statutory bodies, will positively impact the performance of all other officials of those institutions. He appreciated Cabinet Division for sharing the experience of GPMS with other government institutions, and wished that smooth adaption of GPMS will enhance the mobility of both the institutions.

Since GPMS has already been established in Bangladesh, there are important lessons to look at on how the implementation has gone so far. These lessons were shared by Mr. Mohammad Mahiuddin

Khan, Additional Secretary, Cabinet Division. He talked about both the positives and negatives that the government has had to face in attempting a smooth transition of the GPMS into their current system. He noted that moving the focus from process-orientation to results-orientation of the ministries has proved to be a major hindrance.

BIGD Executive Director Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman presided over the seminar, addressed by Cabinet Secretary Muhammad Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, BPSC Chairman Ekram Ahmed, Information Commissioner Prof. Dr. Khurshida Begum Sayeed and Information Secretary Martuza Ahmed.

Prof. Khurshida emphasised on the need for the top level officials to maintain certain performance standards as their actions have a great impact on the performance of all other personnel of the institution. Mr. Bhuiyan revealed the audience on how the government is devising an accountability tool, which, if built appropriately, can be used to hold any government officials, even ministers, accountable for the service they provide.

In the open discussion, Dr. Mahbub Ullah, Professor, University of Dhaka expressed a slightly pessimistic view of the GPMS, stating that certain rigidities were present in government institutions and therefore it is difficult to think that government officials will follow performance management norms. Prof. Md. Golam Rahman, BSS Chairman and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Daffodil University, also voiced his opinion, saying that transparency is a major issue and that it is rarely easy to gather information from government officials. He also shed light on the fact that most Annual Development Budget financed government projects get done towards the end of the fiscal year, greatly compromising the quality of the product. In extreme cases, these projects don't even get completed on time.



Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman is seen delivering his concluding remarks

In the concluding remarks, Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman said there is a strong positive relationship between an efficient bureaucracy and a better performing economy. He reminded the audience that bureaucracy is in fact the trustee of the nation and therefore has a duty to the nation to always improve and maintain performance standards.

Among others, members from the two commissions, government officials, journalists and members of the civil society attended the seminar.

The main purpose of the seminar was to understand how the Government Performance Management System (GPMS) works in Bangladesh and to incorporate that knowledge into creating a better functioning and efficient performance assessment process.

BIGD Research Fellow Attended Several Programmes

Dr. Shanawez Hossain, Research Fellow of BIGD attended several workshops and roundtables on different burning issues related to governance and economics as a representative of BIGD.

Dr. Shanawez Hossain attended the workshop on midterm review of Bangladesh country diagnostic study by Asian Development Bank's Economic Research and Regional Cooperation Department (ERCD), held at the Westin Hotel, Dhaka on 30th August 2015. The country diagnostic study aims to analyse the critical constraints to sustained and inclusive growth in Bangladesh. The workshop was jointly organised by ADB and International Labour Organization (ILO).

Dr. Hossain also attended the discussion workshop on World Bank's Bangladesh Public Expenditure Review Update held on 25th August, 2015 at the World Bank Office, Dhaka. The purpose of the workshop was to present the report's main result to eminent public officials, economists, researchers and observers of the Bangladesh economy and receive feedback on the main policy implications for fiscal policy in Bangladesh. Among others Mr. Johan Zutt, Country Director World Bank, Dr. Akbar Ali Khan, Former adviser to the Caretaker Govt.; Dr. Zahid Hussain, Lead Economist, WB; Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, Executive Director, Policy Research Institute also attended the workshop.

Talk on 'Grassroots Urbanism: A critical investigation into Community Based Organisations in Dhaka's Bustee/slum Settlements' held

BIGD organised a talk titled '**Grassroots Urbanism: A critical investigation into Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in Dhaka's Bustee Settlements**' by Ms. Sally Cawood on August 11th, 2015 at the BIGD Conference Room. Dr. Mirza Hassan, Adjunct Fellow of BIGD chaired session.

In the Talk Ms. Sally Cawood shared her views of working in three slum settlements in Mirpur, Dhaka, and assess the role of NGO created WASH Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and how they interact with existing power structures and institutions at the community level. The presentation was the outline of some preliminary observations about the role of CBOs in accessing basic services (water, sanitation, electricity), and if/how these community-level initiatives can be up-scaled to city-wide and nationwide movements and regional movements.

Dr. Minhaj Mahmud's Paper Presentation at the Workshop on Poor Economics' in Tokyo: Frontiers of Development Economics

Dr. Minhaj Mahmud, the Head of Research of BIGD presented a paper titled 'Infrastructure and Well-being: Employment Effects of Jamuna Bridge in Bangladesh' at the *Workshop on Poor Economics in Tokyo: Frontiers of Development Economics* on August 3rd, 2015 at the Economic Research Building, University of Tokyo, Japan. The paper was prepared jointly by Dr. Minhaj Mahmud and Yasuyuki Sawada, Professor of Economics, University of Tokyo. The ultimate goal of the workshop was to improve the research capacity of participants, thereby contributing to pushing forward the frontier of development studies in Japan. Another aim was to contribute to expanding the domestic and international network of researchers in this field.

The paper evaluates the impact of the Jamuna multipurpose bridge, the largest physical infrastructure in Bangladesh, on employment opportunities. The authors particularly focused on labour market integration effects using survey data that provides information on current and retrospective assessments of household situation in two adjacent districts connected by the bridge. Using a quasi-experimental framework of the canonical difference-in-difference regression methodology, they analysed the impact of this infrastructure on employment and job transition patterns. The research found that, along with decreasing household unemployment, the bridge construction facilitated farm to non-farm shift of employments. Also the treatment effects are heterogeneous across age, gender and education level.

Dr. Sohela Nazneen's Lecture at the Asiatic Society

Dr. Sohela Nazneen, Adjunct Fellow of BIGD provided lecture on 'Negotiating Gender Equity in Bangladesh: The Case of Domestic Violence Act 2010' at the 18th Monthly General Meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh on Saturday, 22nd August 2015 at the auditorium of Asiatic Society Bangladesh. She presented the emerging findings from the Bangladesh part of the research on Gender and Political Settlement with the Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) Research Center, University of Manchester, UK. Dr. Nazneen also focused on what drives gender equity in Bangladesh, specifically looking at the domestic violence Act of 2010, in her speech.

BIGD Executive Director's Activities

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, the Executive Director of BIGD, held several meetings in August 2015 with number of distinguished personalities such as prominent academics and researchers regarding the research collaboration and other relevant issues. Among others, Dr. Rahman had meeting with Dr. Mushtauqe Khan, Professor of Economics, SOAS, University of London, and Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Advisor to the Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP); Professor Farid Uddin Ahmed, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka, Pauline Tamesis, UNDP Country Director; Dr. Tayabur Rahman of Planning Ministry; and Jaap M. de Heer, Netherlands regarding Developing Research proposal and Research collaboration; Professor Fahad Khalil, University of Washington, USA; and Dr. Monzur -ul- Amin Chowdhury, President, Forum for Peoples Voice, Chittagong regarding Advocacy work.

Dr. Rahman had also met with Anindya Chatterjee, Regional Director, IDRC and had a Working Lunch.